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ABSTRACT

Discussed are recommendations of California's 1987 School Readiness Task Force for the education of children 4 through 6 years of age. Recommendations call for: (1) provision of an appropriate, integrated, experiential curriculum; (2) reduction of class size; (3) provision of programs that meet the special needs of culturally and linguistically diverse students and of exceptional children; (4) implementation of classroom organization and teaching methods that reflect the heterogenous skills and abilities of early primary children; (5) provision of appropriate education, training, and remuneration to staff; (6) inclusion of an option for full-day programs; (7) provision of before- and after-school child care or links with child development programs; (8) drastic alteration of child assessment methods; (9) provision of funding and support; (10) the building or remodeling of facilities for the purpose of meeting the needs of early primary programs; (11) encouragement of parental involvement; and (12) implementation of a public awareness campaign that describes appropriate educational practices for children. Estimates of the fiscal impact of the recommendations are included at the end of the report. (RH)

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HERE THEY COME: READY OR NOT!

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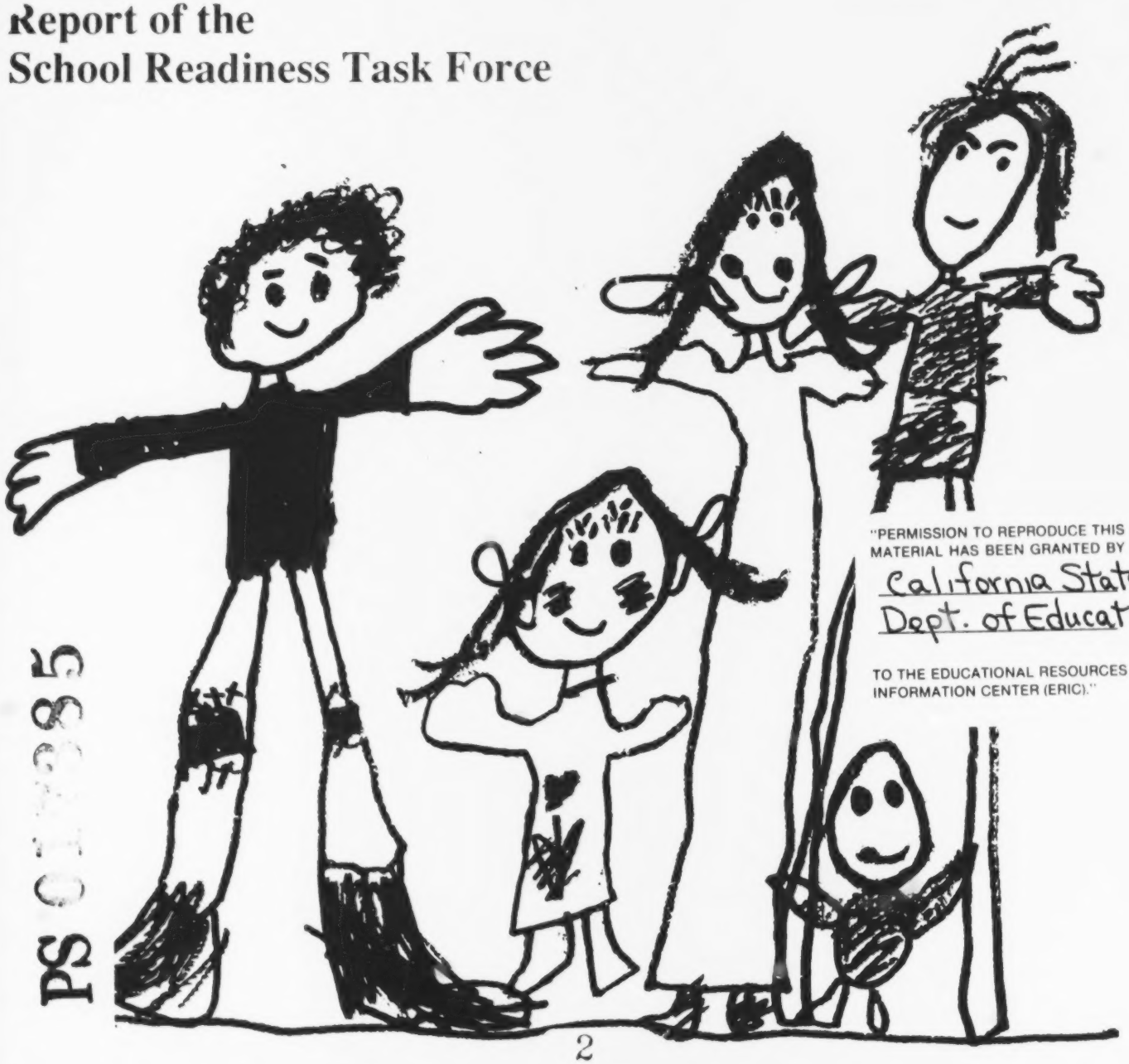
Report of the School Readiness Task Force



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Here They Come: Ready or Not!

Report of the School Readiness Task Force

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 1988

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Superintendent's Message

The children who enter kindergarten today will be the high school graduating class of the year 2000. They will be expected to participate in a society far more complex than previous generations encountered. These students must have the necessary skills to compete in an increasingly technological job market. They also must have the civic and ethical values to keep our democracy alive and develop the character and judgment they need to live up to their potential. What kind of education is necessary during the crucial early years of a child's life—from ages four through six—to prepare them for the twenty-first century? That is the question the School Readiness Task Force was asked to address, and its 12 major recommendations follow in this report: *Here They Come: Ready or Not!*

To date, the educational reform movement has focused largely on the high school and middle grades. In April 1987, I established the 18-member School Readiness Task Force to explore kindergarten education and school readiness issues. The Task Force, composed of professionals and interested persons involved with these issues, worked to develop recommendations for model curricula, educational policy and options for delivering programs. The Task Force held four public hearings during May and June 1987 at which 136 individuals testified. The group also interviewed experts in education and medicine, surveyed current research on child learning and teaching techniques, and reviewed educational policy.

California is not alone in giving attention to school readiness issues. Across the country the educational excellence movement has renewed an interest in kindergarten. About one-third of the states have established full-day kindergartens. Delaware and South Carolina have passed laws making kindergarten attendance compulsory. Florida and Kentucky have mandated that children demonstrate first grade readiness before entering the first grade. Few states, however, have launched as comprehensive a look at school readiness issues as California has.

My charge to the School Readiness Task Force was to:

- Gather data and examine the issue of school readiness and the related development of the kindergarten child;

- Determine how to ensure that students from racial, ethnic, and language minority backgrounds achieve full educational and cultural opportunities and reach their potential;
- Describe creative program options, including alternatives for length of the school day;
- Recommend a model curriculum which emphasizes experiential, meaningful, integrated, active learning;
- Recommend options to assess kindergarten children, including their social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development;
- Determine how to best evaluate students' progress toward achieving the purposes of the educational program.

What happens during a child's first few years in school has a tremendous impact on the rest of that child's schooling. Parents, educators, administrators, physicians, and legislators are expressing growing concern about schooling provided for young children. Because of the necessity to look at the early primary program for children ages four through six as a continuum, we must develop links between programs for four-year-olds and the early primary, primary, and intermediate grades of elementary school.

When implemented, the Task Force recommendations will substantially improve both the quality and quantity of educational services offered to young children. Among the most far reaching is the Task Force's recommendation to change fundamentally the way in which young children are taught. We must halt the use of workbooks and ditto sheets, which are frequently employed to teach skills such as counting and learning the alphabet. The current trend toward increased use of narrowly defined drills that require long periods of "seat" time will undermine the efforts of many of our children and destroy their interest in future learning experiences. While it is important for children to learn basic skills, the teaching techniques and the curriculum used must reflect the proper balance between child-centered activities and content-centered approaches that are appropriate to each child. In addition, this curriculum should be aligned with the rest of the primary school core curriculum. The curriculum must also address the needs of all our students, including our culturally and linguistically diverse students and our exceptional children.

We also must provide the option of full-day programs and before- and after-school child care for those children who need it. Children can derive tremendous benefits, educationally and developmentally, from these programs. As our society changes, we must alter our programs accordingly. We must begin early and expand opportunities at the preschool and kindergarten level so that no child is excluded from benefitting from a quality educational program.

The seeds of failure are planted early; many educators believe that potential dropouts can be clearly identified by third grade. According to *Children in Need,* a report recently released by the Committee for Economic Development—a group of national business leaders and

educators—conservative estimates suggest that as much as 30 percent of the school population is educationally disadvantaged. For every $1 spent today to prevent educational failure, society can save $4.75 in the cost of remedial education, welfare, and crime later on. The price of corrective action may be high, but the cost of inaction is far higher.

I applaud the Task Force for its efforts on behalf of our young children. I greatly appreciate the group's hard work, and I urge you to study its recommendations. How successful are your schools in meeting the needs of children ages four through six? It is up to all of us, working together, to ensure that our early primary programs meet the goals outlined in the following pages.

Bill Honig

California Superintendent of Public Instruction

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Introduction

The first kindergartens were established in this country in the decade following the Civil War. In 1870 there were 11 kindergartens, and by the last decades of the nineteenth century kindergarten had become an accepted part of American society. Kindergarten was regarded as corrective for affluent children who were presumed to be indulged at home, and as beneficial for lower class children who were presumed to be sufficiently hurt by street influences to need the orderliness and social morality of kindergarten. The purpose of kindergarten was character building. Moral goals prevailed; industry, neatness, reverence, self-respect, and cooperation were expected to result from a properly directed kindergarten education.

Later, a kindergarten developed which was grounded in democratic participation. Participation in problem solving by working together in relationships and reconstructing daily experiences in the kindergarten environment provided an active form of education based on interest, energy, initiative, and cooperation.

Then, in the late 1950's and into the 1960's the spotlight of criticism focused on American education. Sputnik was launched and books such as *Why Johnny Can't Read* were published. The elementary school curriculum was pushed down so that students were expected to learn more at an earlier age, and there seemed to be a trend to accelerate childhood. Educators and parents were led to believe that "earlier is better" and that an early start in academics led to more success in later life. Early childhood education lost its innocence and special status as it was abruptly shoved into the economic, political, and social spotlight. To compound problems, in 1978 Proposition 13 in California drastically changed the way schools were funded, which resulted in the elimination of many school programs, such as music and art.

Today, the children who enter kindergarten appear to be different from those of even a decade ago, partly due to the increase in the number of children who attend prekindergarten programs. The percentage of U.S. children between the ages of three and five enrolled in a preschool program has increased from approximately 30 percent in 1966 to almost 50 percent today.

Neither kindergarten nor preschool attendance is mandatory, although all California public school districts must offer kindergarten programs. Approximately 78 percent of all five-year-olds are enrolled in California public kindergartens. Currently, California spends $730 million for over 336,000 kindergartners and $35.5 million in part-day state preschools to support over 19,000 children. Thousands of additional three- and four-

year-olds attend private nursery schools, Head Start programs, church-related preschools, or full-day child care.

Changing demographics in California will further challenge kindergarten instruction. By the year 2000 the majority of children in this state's schools will be children of color. For many of these children, English is a second language. California kindergartens must meet the needs of this culturally diverse group of students, and currently many do not. Children of color, children who have English as a second language, and children who are poor are most likely to be retained in kindergarten. They are also the most likely to attend inner-city overcrowded schools.

In addition, increasing numbers of students in the future may not have attended preschool. About 41 percent of English-speaking majority children and only 15 percent of Mexican-born children now come to kindergarten from preschool. Low income parents have an increasingly difficult time finding preschool programs that they can afford because of the long waiting lists for subsidized programs. Thus, the past function of kindergarten to provide children with their first school experience is still a possibility for many entering kindergartners. At the same time many other children will have attended some sort of prekindergarten program.

There is always one moment in childhood when the door opens and lets the future in.
Graham Greene

The environment of kindergarten has changed in an effort to accelerate learning and meet demands that students master academic skills earlier and earlier. The concepts which have traditionally been taught in first and second grades are now increasingly presented in preschool and kindergarten. This trend toward a more academic experience and "seatwork" has resulted in a kindergarten curriculum that focuses on learning letters and letter sounds; combining sounds to read words and sentences; counting, adding, and subtracting; and instructional strategies that focus on fine motor skills, paper and pencil activities, workbooks, and ditto sheets. These tasks often require passive sitting for long periods of time, listening, and rote memorization rather than real comprehension of what is being taught. Too often this emphasis excludes other essential elements of the curriculum, such as language development; familiarity with stories, music, and oral language experiences; artistic exploration; social interaction; and large muscle development. Children respond best to learning experiences which personally engage them in meaningful activities and challenge them with new ideas and experiences.

The early primary program for children ages four through six should address the needs of the whole child. When children leave kindergarten, they should be able to:

- Use language for complex communication.
- Recognize and use opportunities for learning through language, reading, social studies, science, and the arts.
- Use problem-solving strategies and begin to understand mathematical concepts.
- Play individually and with peers and function as a member of a group.
- Demonstrate self-control and self-discipline.

- Sustain interest in an activity and listen to adults and peers.
- Be curious about and challenged by the world.
- Demonstrate fine and gross motor skills and coordination.

Research has shown that chronological age does not determine success in kindergarten. Rather a child's success is a complicated issue involving such factors as individual developmental capacities; the expectations of parents; the appropriateness of the curriculum; and the link between preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. The School Readiness Task Force found that too often children ages four through six are receiving inappropriate instruction. However, schools should be changed to fit the needs of students rather than to continue to try to fit the children to programs which are inappropriate.

In addition, assessment tests of dubious value are being used to keep children out of kindergarten or to put them in two-year kindergartens. For too many children, the beginning of their school career is characterized by tracking and labeling, stress, and a sense of failure. These children may never experience a love of learning. For instance, while they may be able to decode words and read in the short run, they may not want to read nor will they read for pleasure in the future. The bulk of current educational research and theory strongly suggests that development occurs only as a result of interaction between the child and the environment. If a child is given opportunities to engage in hands-on manipulation of materials within a rich and stimulating environment structured by a teacher trained in early childhood education, the child will develop more abstract thought and be capable of successful interactions within a learning setting.

The recommendations of the Task Force for the early primary years follow:

1. An appropriate, integrated, experiential curriculum should be provided for children ages four through six.
2. Class size should be reduced.
3. Programs should meet the special needs of our culturally and linguistically diverse students, as well as the needs of exceptional children.
4. Classroom organization and teaching methods should reflect the heterogenous skills and abilities of children in the early primary programs.
5. The staff of the early primary programs should receive appropriate education, training, and remuneration.
6. Full-day programs should be an option for children ages four through six.
7. Programs should provide either before- and after-school child care or links with child development programs for children who need this care.
8. Assessment methods for children in early primary programs should be drastically altered.
9. Funding and support must be made available for the early primary programs.

10. Facilities should be built or remodeled to meet the needs of the early primary programs.
11. Parental involvement should be encouraged.
12. A public awareness campaign should be launched describing appropriate learning practices for children ages four through six.

Estimates of the fiscal impact of the Task Force's recommendations are also included at the end of this report.

Appropriate educational practices for four- through six-year-olds can result in students who are self-assured and highly motivated to learn and who have the ability to solve problems and to master skills. Parents, legislators, business leaders, educators, and the public must become partners in making the child's first school experience a positive one and the beginning of a lifelong love of learning.

Recommendations

1. An Appropriate, Integrated, Experiential Educational Program Should Be Provided for Children Ages Four Through Six.

The curriculum for four- through six-year-olds should be age- and individual-appropriate and integrate experiential learning with instruction in reading, writing, math, and language acquisition. What exactly is an appropriate, experiential, integrated curriculum?

As described by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), a major national child development organization, age- and individual-appropriate means that the program is designed for the age group served and implemented with attention to the needs and differences of the individual children enrolled. Research indicates that there are universal sequences of growth and change that occur in children during their first nine years of life. At the same time, each child is unique with an individual pattern of growth as well as personality, learning style, and family background. Enormous variance exists in the timing of individual development that is within the normal range. Developmentally appropriate programs are flexible in their expectations about when and how children will acquire certain competencies. Recognition of individual differences dictates that a variety of teaching methods be used.

The curriculum in early childhood programs should be a balance between child-centered and content-centered curriculum. The challenge for teachers and curriculum planners is to ensure that the content of the curriculum is taught to take optimum advantage of the child's natural abilities, interests, and enthusiasm for learning.

As NAEYC notes, students ages four through six are eager to learn; they learn by doing. Learning is a complex process resulting from the interaction of children's own thinking and their experiences. Knowledge is not something that is given to children as though they are empty vessels to be filled. Children acquire knowledge about their cognitive, physical, and social worlds through playful interaction with objects and people. A rich, developmentally appropriate learning environment provided by a trained early childhood teacher surrounds the child with the artifacts of reading, writing, and mathematics. Through relevant and interesting activities, children begin to construct their understanding of letters, words, sounds, and numbers. Young children do not need to be

forced to learn; they are motivated by their own desire to make sense of their world. Thus, their learning is "experiential."

How young children learn should determine how teachers of young children teach. But the word teach implies telling or giving information. Teachers of young children prepare the environment so that it provides stimulating and challenging materials and activities. Because teachers understand that the children are constructing their own knowledge, the teachers should be more interested in the cognitive processes being employed than in right answers. Skilled teachers observe carefully and pose appropriate challenges to push children's thinking further.

If you let me grow
at my own pace
Don't rush me and
you'll see
The me, that I really am
Be patient.
LET ME BE ME.
Marion Thomas

Children's responses to rote tasks, such as counting from one to twenty, do not necessarily reflect real understanding of the information they have memorized. On the other hand, spontaneous practicing of counting numbers is frequently a choice children make to internalize and master their new discoveries. This difference between externally imposed drill and child-selected practice shows how mastery of skills is damaged or enhanced, depending on the educational approach being used. For children to understand fully and remember what they have learned, the information must be meaningful to them in the context of their experiences and development. They then are more likely to persist with a task and be more motivated to learn.

Children's learning is integrated during the early years. Young children do not need to distinguish learning by subject area. Overemphasis on mastery of narrowly defined reading and arithmetic skills and excessive drill of these skills threaten children's interest in using the skills they have acquired. An integrated approach to curriculum is more meaningful to young children. The curriculum may be planned around themes that are selected by the children or by the teacher based on the children's interests. Through these experiences, children see how reading and writing are useful in a natural way rather than learning letter names, sounds, and word identification in fragmented and isolated periods of instruction.

An integrated curriculum includes the following characteristics: opportunities for reading, speaking, writing, and listening; for logical and mathematical thinking; for experiencing the arts; for health education; for awareness of self, family, and expanded community; for valuing cultural diversity; for psychomotor development; and for building self-esteem. For example, an instructional unit on transportation could include having students take a field trip on a bus, draw a picture and sing a song about the bus, count the number of children who can sit on the bus, and dictate a story about a bus.

The early years are a time to begin the mastery of academic skills and to develop social skills and feelings of self-esteem. The urge to master the skills of reading, writing, and calculating is as powerful in young children as the urge to stand and walk is for the one-year-old. Yet when expectations exceed children's capabilities and children are pressured to acquire skills too far beyond their abilities, their motivation to learn as well as their self-esteem may be impaired.

The use of project or theme teaching permits teachers to adapt the core curriculum to meet the needs of children who are more academically advanced or who have special needs. It is especially appropriate for a wide age range, since activities can be planned to allow for individual differences. Tasks are completed, valued, and accepted according to each child's capacity to respond. Children make choices within the limits of the materials and environment provided by the teacher.

The concept of an integrated, developmentally appropriate curriculum is not necessarily well understood by many educators and parents. Teachers should be encouraged to draw on two readily available sources for this curriculum–the State Department of Education's new frameworks and model curriculum guides and the NAEYC's position papers–and to examine their present teaching approaches and adapt them to those recommended in these materials. These documents provide flexible guidelines and examples of age-appropriate and inappropriate practices.

The State Department of Education should encourage the use of its frameworks and guides, which are currently distributed to each school, so that every teacher of children ages four through six will have the benefit of these materials. The Department and State Board of Education should also explore ways in which more state instructional materials funds can be spent on manipulatives, such as blocks, paints, objects to sort and count, and other developmentally appropriate materials. A person with expertise in child development–early childhood education should serve on every curriculum commission which reviews these materials. One reason that worksheets and workbooks are uzed extensively in kindergarten is that copymasters and workbooks are among the approved basic instructional materials which can be purchased with state funds. Because experiential and developmentally appropriate materials are seldom included on the basic instructional materials lists, teachers too frequently must use their own money to purchase these materials.

2. Class Size Should Be Reduced.

California has the second largest class size in the nation, with an average of 28 students. Clearly, there is a relationship between large class size and didactic teaching. It is virtually impossible for teachers who have large classes to individualize the curriculum. To implement an experiential curriculum, California must reduce its class size. Each class should have a teacher trained in early childhood education, as well as a trained aide, so that there is an adult/child ratio of no more than 1 to 12.

The goal in California is to reduce class size at the primary level by 1991 to 24 students to one teacher, and legislation should be enacted to reduce class size.

3. Programs Should Meet the Special Needs of Our Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students, as Well as the Needs of Exceptional Children.

Of the 6 million schoolchildren in California in the year 2000, the majority will be children of color. At least 15 percent of the state's children will arrive at school without any knowledge of English. Presently, one in four of our students comes from a home where a language other than English is spoken.

To meet these students' needs best in the early primary grades, the schools should provide many opportunities for language interaction. Children do not learn language from being quiet and instructed by an adult. They learn from speaking. The language that the child brings to school must be valued and, when possible, utilized in learning basic concepts while the child is acquiring English. The goal is academic success and proficiency in English without losing proficiency in the home language. While the long-term goal for these students is to acquire English, dialogues between teachers and children will be inhibited if the adult does not speak the same language as the child. Furthermore, the child's self-concept is closely tied to his or her home language and culture.

It is the stillness we have to justify, not movement.

Susan Isaacs

As the *Safeguard* report from the National Black Child Development Institute points out, children should have adults in their classroom who share their culture. The State Department of Education should actively encourage districts to represent cultural diversity in staffing, so that the staffs are racially and ethnically representative of the children served. The incorporation of members of the children's racial and ethnic groups in the school helps promote the children's self-esteem and self-confidence, provides positive role models for the children's personal aspirations and goals, and increases the parents' respect for and comfort in a setting where their own ethnic groups are represented.

Bilingual staffing is important to ensure success for the language minority student, but currently there is a shortage of bilingual teachers. Only about 25 percent of limited-English-proficient children are taught by a teacher fluent in their native language. Ideally, teachers should be bilingual; but trained parents, volunteers, and aides can be used if there are no bilingual teachers available. It is equally important to provide Black children with adults who are aware of and understand the value and structure of Black language as it relates to standard English usage. To increase the number of teachers of color, teacher training institutions and high schools should encourage students of color to become teachers of four- to six-year-olds. The State Department of Education and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing should also encourage teacher training institutions to emphasize proficiency in another language and a multicultural curriculum.

In addition, exceptional children should be provided services with non-handicapped peers to the extent possible. The State Department of Education should encourage special education programs to accelerate the expansion of services to children ages three through five with exceptional needs at the earliest possible date, rather than by 1991 as authorized by federal and state laws. Special federal funding has been allocated to provide the services required.

4. Classroom Organization and Teaching Methods Should Reflect the Heterogenous Skills and Abilities of Children in the Early Primary Programs.

Present limits on resources will constrain to some extent the types of classroom configurations and teaching options that can be considered for children ages four through six. However, the heterogenous nature of children in the early primary grades can still be recognized, and a developmentally appropriate curriculum can be fully utilized within the traditional self-contained, same-age classroom. The types and combinations of classroom configurations which are effective will vary significantly with circumstances. Self-contained, same-age classrooms are sometimes linked with multiage classes to achieve an optimum learning environment; prekindergarten and kindergarten age children are grouped together in a number of these programs. In other programs, kindergarten and first grade students form a class.

Furthermore, while children ages four through six rarely form one class in current programs, this option should be explored further in light of the growing body of research regarding the benefits of multiage groups. Breaking the "tyranny of age" may have value for students at all levels, and experimental programs should be established so that communities can explore this option. Younger children in mixed-age classrooms tend to engage in more mature activities than when they are in same-age classrooms. Having older children explain things to younger children increases the older children's understanding of concepts, and the children who give help are most likely to have improved achievement. Care should be taken, however, not to "level down" the curriculum in this setting to the detriment of the more advanced students in the class. A multiage developmentally appropriate unit of schooling may reduce the current problems of identifying children not ready for school and the early retention of children.

In all cases, districts should be encouraged to develop planned links in articulation between programs for four-year-olds, the early primary program, and the primary and intermediate grades of elementary school.

5. The Staff of the Early Primary Programs Should Receive Appropriate Education, Training, and Remuneration.

The recommendations in this report depend on a highly trained professional teaching staff. The teachers must teach, assess, and coordinate among the early primary program and child care, special education, and services offered to families. All these skills require specialized training, and those teachers who do not already have these skills should receive the necessary training.

There is no substitute for a teacher who reads children good stories. It whets the appetite of children for reading, and provides a model of skillful oral reading. It is a practice that should continue throughout the grades.

Becoming a Nation of Readers

Under the current system, all public school teachers who teach kindergarten through twelfth grade must have teaching credentials, but they are not required to have child development/early childhood training. Teachers in many of the current programs for four-year-olds are required to have training in child development, but not teaching credentials. A two-tiered system must be avoided where teachers in the early primary grades and teachers of four-year-olds are expected to implement the same programs but with different training, status, and remuneration. To enhance the teaching profession in the early primary program, the state should ensure that all elementary teachers receive training in early childhood education/child development, and the status and remuneration of teachers in the early primary grades should be equal to that of teachers at other grade levels. The following should occur:

- The State Department of Education should offer inservice training and technical assistance to administrators, school boards, teachers, and parents regarding developmentally appropriate practices for children ages four through six. In particular, school districts with large percentages of at-risk children should be identified to receive inservice training and technical assistance to implement this report's recommendations.
- Teacher training institutions should include programs for multiple-subject credentials with early childhood emphasis. The institutions should emphasize child development/early childhood education for all elementary teachers.
- Teacher training institutions and the Commission on Teacher Credentialing should increase sponsorship of preservice internship programs for teachers of children ages four through six. These programs permit teachers with BA degrees in child development/early childhood education to teach at full or 7/8 pay in a lower primary program if they are enrolled in an internship program. The internship takes approximately two years; interns are supervised by another teacher, and they take classes when school is not in session.
- School site councils and administrators should allocate School Improvement Program funds for child development/early childhood education training of teachers and aides currently teaching children ages five and six.
- Legislation should be enacted requiring public school teachers of four- through six-year-olds to be credentialed and have child develop-

ment/early childhood education training. Those teachers who do not have such training may take preservice or inservice training or college courses.

- Legislation should be enacted to make salary schedules for teachers in programs for four-year-olds in public schools comparable to the salaries paid to kindergarten through twelfth grade teachers; the salaries should be based on training, credentials, and experience.
- Additional legislation should be enacted to include the statutory cost-of-living adjustment in programs for four-year-olds.

6. Full-day Programs Should Be an Option for Children Ages Four Through Six.

Many children ages four through six will benefit from a full-day (six hour) program, and these programs should be an option. The pace of activities should take into account the length of the day. Quiet activities should be interspersed with busy ones, and more solitary activities should be alternated with group activities. Children should be given ample opportunity for rests and snacks.

In a full-day program, teachers have more time to teach and students have more time to learn. Although the primary advantage of a full-day program is educational, recent changes in family demographics make a full-day program a practical alternative as well. As more mothers work outside the home, half-day (three hour) programs put undue pressure on families, especially single parents. Many children have already spent several years in full-day child care and are ready for a longer program. Increasing numbers of dual career families also abandon the public schools when faced with a part-day kindergarten. In addition, the early primary program must connect with programs for teenage parents who go to school themselves.

Legislation should be enacted to provide an option to increase the duration of programs for children ages four through six to coincide with the hours of the primary school day in each district when the program includes developmentally appropriate activities throughout the whole day.

7. Programs Should Provide Either Before- and After-School Child Care or Links with Child Development Programs for Children Who Need This Care.

In 1985, 51 percent of California women with children under age six were in the labor force, and approximately 430,000 children received care outside the home. Therefore, whenever possible, early primary school programs should include before- and after-school child care.

Parents should pay for these programs, and subsidized funding should be available to low-income parents so that they can participate. Currently, there is an acute shortage of subsidized spaces for children from low-income families, and these shortages will only worsen as more women enter the work force and more factors in our society contribute to poverty. Both "latchkey" children who are unsupervised after school and children who are in poor quality after-school child care are at risk for emotional disturbances and school failure. More positive outcomes occur for children who attend high quality child development programs that are continuous with the children's elementary school programs.

The State Department of Education should also actively encourage districts to join with neighborhood child care providers to develop links between public school programs and child care.

8. Assessment Methods for Children in the Early Programs Must Be Drastically Altered.

There has been a significant increase in the formal assessment of kindergartners. Basing major placement decisions on these assessments is poor educational practice and should be halted.

Standardized tests have changed during the past 20 years; in general, items that were scored as first grade items in 1960 are now scored as kindergarten items. The *Gesell School Readiness Test* or other school readiness tests are being used either to screen out children before they enter school or to track children into two-year kindergartens. The *Gesell* is intended to assess a child's developmental age, which is a composite of social, emotional, intellectual, and physical characteristics. However, the validity and reliability of the test's results are in question. In addition, these assessments are frequently conducted by individuals with minimal training in assessment. A single assessment test should not be used for exclusion or placement of a child; assessment can instead be used for planning curricula.

Assessment tests have become prevalent as teachers try to protect children from large classes and overly academic programs. Testing also has been employed to protect teachers who are pressured to produce high

test scores by excluding children who it is assumed will not do well and to limit the number of children who are considered difficult to handle because of their behavior.

Children will be successful in the early primary program if their teachers use extensive individualized assessments which rely heavily on teachers' observations and parental input. This type of assessment happens daily and informally, and it should occur more frequently for planning and program evaluation rather than for placement purposes. However, it can occur only when teachers have been trained to observe children as they work with them and where there are small groups.

Babe Ruth struck out 1,360 times!

Standardized tests should be used only in special cases, and the tests must meet the American Psychological Association's criteria for acceptability. Outside advisors, such as health care professionals, should be consulted more often for assessment and diagnosis if problems appear. Developmental screening, as opposed to readiness tests, IQ tests, or general developmental evaluations, may be used to identify children with special needs. For instance, this screening may identify children with vision or hearing problems so that help can begin while the probability of remediation is still high. Initial identification of problems must be followed by consultation with parents and others. The State Department of Education must also ensure that all districts enforce the law regarding the testing of Black and Hispanic children and their placement in special education programs.

Although some educators believe that retention can be beneficial, the research suggests that retained children are behind promoted children in all academic areas, social adjustment, self-concept, and attitudes toward school. The most recent statewide retention data available at the time that the School Readiness Task Force did its analysis were based on students who were in the the third grade in 1985-86. Their kindergarten retention rate was 4.4 percent. While this percentage was lower than had been expected, retention is a growing problem.

The data revealed that boys were more likely to be retained than girls (5.4 percent boys vs. 3.5 percent girls). Children for whom English was a second language were more likely to be retained than children whose home language was English (5.3 percent English as a second language vs. 4.0 percent English as a home language). Children whose home language was Spanish (6.1 percent retention rate) or Vietnamese (5.0 percent retention rate) were more likely to be retained than children whose home language was Chinese (2.6 percent), Korean (1.0 percent), or Japanese (2.1 percent). Children with unskilled (6.5 percent) and skilled (4.4 percent) parents were more likely to have been retained than children with semiprofessional (2.8 percent) or executive parents (2.6 percent). Children who qualified by family income for special funds also were more likely to be retained than children whose families did not qualify (5.8 percent if qualified vs. 3.2 percent if not qualified). Note: After the Task Force made its analysis, data for third graders in 1986-87 became available; their kindergarten retention rate increased to 4.6 percent. Ethnicity data, collected for the first time, showed the follow-

ing retention rates: American Indian, 6.2 percent; Asian, 3.1 percent; Pacific Islander, 3.8 percent; Filipino, 2.6 percent; Hispanic, 5.8 percent; Black, 3.1 percent; White, 4.4 percent; and Other, 4.4 percent.

9. Funding and Support Must Be Made Available for the Early Primary Programs.

The State Department of Education should sponsor legislation to:

- Change the Education Code definition of school entrance age to three years and nine months to allow school districts meeting State Department of Education criteria to provide a developmentally appropriate program for these children.
- Make supplemental funds available to public schools through competitive grants or applications for the following types of activities:
  - training and planning at the school and district levels
  - lowering class size
  - increasing instructional time
- Provide both public schools and private agencies the opportunity to educate four-year-olds through a competitive grant process in which applications would be approved on the basis of criteria developed by the Department that are consistent with the recommendations of this report. School districts should take the lead in organizing such programs along the lines of the "latchkey" programs established in 1985 as a result of Senate Bill 303 (Roberti). In this process, school districts would receive priority for funding when applications of equal merit are received for the same geographic area. Further, priority should be given to programs serving a majority of at-risk children (i.e., children living in poverty, limited-English proficient, children with exceptional needs, or abused and neglected children).
- Provide funds for expanding child development programs.
- Provide funds for state level costs for development of early primary program guidelines and technical assistance to local programs.

As the State Department of Education moves to implement the recommendations in this report, appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that all divisions within the Department responsible for programs serving students in the early primary programs–such as Child Development; Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment; and Special Education–coordinate their activities.

10. Facilities Should Be Built or Remodeled to Meet the Needs of the Early Primary Programs.

State financed school building projects are limited by law on an allowable square foot per pupil basis. California school facilities' square footage standards are well below those of other states for all grade levels, and these standards fail to address the requirements of modern instructional programs. School districts with large numbers of at-risk children are the most likely to be overcrowded and have the least amount of available space for new programs.

The State Department of Education should sponsor legislation to:

- Increase the current state school building aid square foot per pupil allowances to increase the space available for preschool, prekindergarten, and child development programs.
- Provide sufficient facilities funding for public schools that have the greatest unhoused need in the early primary grades, particularly those with high concentrations or large numbers of at-risk children.

11. Parental Involvement Should Be Encouraged.

Traveller,
there is no path,
You create the path
as you journey
Antonio Machado

Parental involvement plays a critical role in a child's success in school. If parents become linked to the school early in their child's schooling, there is a greater chance that their involvement will continue during their child's later school years.

Methods must be developed which allow working parents to become involved in their children's education. Some creative strategies include: using the school to provide practical skills classes; having parents' meetings and activities outside the school and after school hours; sending home periodic bulletins; providing child care for parents' meetings; and giving parents information in community settings, such as grocery stores and laundromats.

In addition, parent education classes provide a formal way to incorporate parents in the learning activities of their children. These classes should be conducted in the parents' language. Parent education centers can include lending libraries of toys and books, information for parents on using low-cost learning materials at home, and updated television and video guides.

Parent advisory groups should be established. Such groups can serve as important advocates for the schools. More importantly, parental involvement extends parents' own education about the school, child development, and educational policy; makes the school accountable to parents; solidifies links between school and home; and gives parents a

sense of power to effect change which is critical to their own self-concepts and those of their children.

12. A Public Awareness Campaign Should Be Launched Describing Appropriate Learning Practices for Children Ages Four Through Six.

A public awareness campaign should be developed on the appropriate learning practices for children ages four through six. The campaign should explain that a child's development predicts how that child understands his or her world. The campaign should describe what appropriate goals and expectations are for children in this age group and what determines a successful school program. Too many educators and parents are unfamiliar with what type of early primary education leads to a child's future success.

The campaign should reach five audiences–the children themselves, the general public, parents, school officials, and teachers. A variety of media, including public service announcements, pamphlets, and posters, should be developed and disseminated.

All I Ever Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

By Robert Fulghum

Most of what I really need to know about how to live, and what to do, and how to be, I learned in kindergarten. Wisdom was not at the top of the graduate school mountain, but there in the sandbox at nursery school.

These are the things I learned: Share everything. Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your own mess. Don't take things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Flush. Warm cookies and milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some and dance and play and work every day some.

Take a nap every afternoon. When you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands and stick together. Be aware of wonder. Remember the little seed in the plastic cup. The roots go down and the plant goes up and nobody really knows how or why, but we are all like that.

Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the plastic cup... they all die. So do we.

And then remember the book about Dick and Jane and the first word you learned; the biggest word of all: ***LOOK!*** *Everything you need to know is in there somewhere. The Golden Rule and love and basic sanitation; ecology and politics and sane living.*

Think of what a better world it would be if we all ... the whole world ... had cookies and milk about 3 o'clock every afternoon and then lay down with our blankets for a nap. Or if we had a basic policy in our nation and other nations to always put things back where we found them and cleaned up our own messes. And it is still true, no matter how old you are, when you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together.

(Copyright from a forthcoming book entitled *All I Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten*, Robert Fulghum, Random House, fall, 1988. Used by permission of the author and copyright holder.)

The Task Force's Process

The 18-member School Readiness Task Force was funded by an interagency agreement between the State Department of Education and the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) to staff the Task Force.

The Task Force held four public hearings in May and June 1987 in Sacramento, Costa Mesa, San Jose, and Fresno. Over 130 individuals testified. These individuals included preschool and K-12 teachers and administrators, school board members, college educators, pediatricians, school psychologists, and parents. They spoke on curriculum; assessment; entry age; bilingual, cultural, and social issues; public school early academic emphasis; program options; public school responsibility for prekindergarten programs; retention; and teacher preparation.

In addition to general Task Force work, each Task Force member worked on a subcommittee: developmental needs, curriculum, articulation, assessment, and governance. The subcommittees interviewed experts, surveyed the current literature, visited programs, analyzed problems, and made specific suggestions for improvement. The entire Task Force reviewed suggestions and formulated recommendations which were submitted in a report, and the State Department of Education has summarized these findings in the preceding pages.

Copies of the full report of the School Readiness Task Force are available for $4.25 each, plus sales tax for California residents, from Bureau of Publications Sales, California State Department of Education, P.O. Box 271, Sacramento, CA 95802-0271. In addition, a 400-page Appendix, which includes hearing summaries, an annotated bibliography, and NAEYC position statements, will be available from Publications Sales for $16.50, plus sales tax for California residents, after June 30, 1988.

The Fiscal Impact of the Recommendations

The Task Force's recommendations, when implemented, would make sweeping changes in both the quality and quantity of educational services available to young children. Consequently, the cost of the services is substantial. However, it is assumed that the additional revenues needed will not come entirely from the State General Fund. Instead, support for these costs should reflect a shared responsibility between the State General Fund, local revenues (in the form of General Obligation bonds), and parent fees where appropriate.

The costs of implementing the Task Force's recommendations are either one-time or ongoing in nature. For example, some costs, such as new classroom construction to house the smaller classes proposed by the Task Force, are one-time capital outlay costs. These costs will be met through the sale of state and local bonds. Other costs, such as reducing class size, reflect the salaries of new teachers who must be hired to teach the new classes created by lowering class size. These costs are ongoing and require funds each year from the State General Fund. This latter type of cost category is also implemented over several years. Not all of the recommendations have costs associated with them; those without cost implications are not discussed in this section.

The recommendations and their associated costs have been grouped into six categories to make the cost estimates easier to understand:

Training and Planning
New Classes and Lower Class Size
New Facilities
Expanded Child Care
Other
State Administration

The following table summarizes the recommendations and cost estimates; after the table comes a detailed description of the costs associated with the recommendations made by the Task Force. In some cases, the recommendations and associated costs could be phased in over a period of years. To facilitate the display of fiscal impact, certain recommendations are shown on the basis of the cost per 1,000 pupils.

Summary of Recommendations and Cost Estimates

Categories	Task Force's recommendations, by number												One-time	Ongoing
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
Training and Planning	x	x		x	x			x	x		x		$19.9 Million	$2.3 Million
New Classes and Lower Class Size		x				x			x					$1.6 Million/ 1000 pupils
New Facilities		x				x			x	x			$2.5 Million/ 1000 pupils	
Expanded Child Care							x		x					$1.8 Million/ 1000 pupils
Other					x									$1.6 Million
State Administration			x		x				x			x	$0.15 Million	$1.5 Million

Detail of Costs

Cost	Training and Planning **(Recommendations 1, 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 11)**
$4.2 Million	Training teachers to address the needs of children in the early primary program, including reevaluating assessment tools, will generate a one-time cost of approximately $4.2 million. This cost, which amounts to $5.30 per student served, includes providing training to those teachers who currently do not have early childhood education training, and providing inservice training to early primary program teachers regarding the most appropriate methods of instruction for four- through six-year-olds. It is assumed that a portion of the training costs will be met by reallocating existing funds presently used for staff development purposes for these teachers.
$2.7 Million	An additional one-time expenditure of $1.5 million is necessary for training the new teachers hired to teach the incoming four-year-olds; and $1.2 million so that the new teachers hired to reduce class size have the appropriate training.
$13 Million	To ensure that school districts have adequate incentive to adopt experiential, developmentally appropriate curricula for their early primary programs, one-time planning grants ranging from $5,000 to $25,000 per district will be provided to assist schools and districts in accomplishing the necessary planning. These grants will cost approximately $13 million and will be awarded on a competitive basis.
$2.3 Million	Increasing parent involvement is another important Task Force recommendation which has cost implications. Parental involvement in and of itself obviously does not have a cost; however, to encourage and organize such participation, schools must spend much more time on this activity. Approximately $5,000 per district, or $2.3 million annually, will be needed on an ongoing basis for districts to organize and coordinate parental involvement.
	Total training and planning will have one-time costs of $19.9 million and ongoing annual costs of $2.3 million.

New Classes and Lower Class Size

(Recommendations 2, 6, 9)

Cost

Lowering the age at which children can enter school to four years of age will create a demand for new teachers and classrooms, as well as many other services and supplies that support classroom operations. Of the approximately 402,000 four-year-olds in California, it is estimated that 50 percent, or 201,000, will enter school. Reducing class size and providing the option of a full-day program will also generate additional costs. The implementation of these programs and their associated costs could be phased in over several years.

$1.2 Million per 1,000 pupils

Assuming the current class size of 27.8 students for kindergarten through grade three, it will cost approximately $1.2 million for every 1,000 pupils (201,000 pupils in total) for teachers' salaries and benefits to address the needs of the incoming four-year-old population.

$.2 Million per 1,000 pupils

To reduce the class size of prekindergarten, kindergarten, and first grades to 24 students, it will cost approximately $.2 million for every 1,000 pupils (1,052,000 pupils in total). This cost is split between the cost of reducing the class size for children already in the public school system—80 percent, and for those four-year-olds entering the system—20 percent. These new funds would be allocated on an application basis to school districts that develop and adopt phase-in plans.

$.2 Million per 1,000 pupils

If districts also provide a full-day program for children ages four and five, an ongoing cost of approximately $.2 million annually for every 1,000 children (592,400 pupils in total, although the actual number of parents who will choose a full-day program is unknown) will need to be provided for classroom aides, assuming current class size of 27.8. (Currently, in many instances, kindergarten teachers instruct one-half day and assist another teacher the other one-half day; when the length of the school day is extended, teachers will be teaching one class all day and will need assistance from an aide.) To provide a full-day program for four- and five-year-olds and to reduce class size to 24 students will generate an ongoing cost of an additional $36,635 for every 1,000 pupils.

Estimated costs for new classes and lower class size amount to $1.6 million for every 1,000 pupils.

Cost

New Facilities

(Recommendations 2, 6, 9, 10)

Several of the Task Force's recommendations, including lowering the school age to four years, lengthening the school day, and reducing class size, create new needs for classrooms. The construction of these facilities and their associated costs could be phased in over several years.

$1.1 Million per 1,000 pupils

Building new facilities to address the needs of incoming four-year-olds will generate one-time costs estimated at $1.1 million for every 1,000 four-year-olds (201,000 pupils in total).

$1.1 Million per 1,000 pupils

If districts provide a full-day program for children ages four and five who previously attended school for one-half day, the estimated one-time costs for new classrooms (assuming current class size of 27.8) is $1.1 million for every 1,000 pupils (592,400 pupils in total).

$.3 Million per 1,000 pupils

New facilities needed to lower the class size for four- through six-year-olds will generate an estimated one-time cost of $.3 million for every 1,000 pupils (1,052,000 pupils in total). This cost is split between facilities for children already in the public school system—80 percent, and those for incoming four-year-olds—20 percent.

These cost estimates encompass the recommendation that new funding be made available for facilities in districts with high-risk children that now have inadequate space.

To pay for the new facilities needed to accommodate the additional classrooms, state and local bond measures would have to be enacted by the people of California.

New facilities will have one-time costs of $2.5 million for every 1,000 pupils.

Cost

Expanded Child Care

(Recommendations 7, 9)

$1.8 Million per 1,000 pupils

State funding is currently available for before- and after-school child care, but additional funds need to be made available for such programs. The ongoing cost of serving all eligible four-, five-, and six-year-olds is about $1.8 million for every 1,000 children (373,100 in total). This cost is split between five- and six-year-olds—80 percent, and four-year-olds—20 percent. To the extent that summer child care programs are offered, there would be additional costs. It is assumed that existing school facilities would also serve as child care centers before and after school. State funds provided for expanded child care would be allocated to providers under existing contract mechanisms. Where appropriate, parent fees would also be used to pay program costs.

Expanded child care will have ongoing costs of $1.8 million for every 1,000 pupils.

Cost	Other **(Recommendation 5)**
Not Available	It is pointed out in the Task Force's recommendations that based on training, credentials, and experience, teachers in programs for four-year-olds within public schools are not paid salaries comparable to those teachers in K-12 programs. Although this will be an additional cost to school districts, data regarding this disparity in salaries were not collected, and potential costs of this recommendation have not been projected.
$1.6 Million	A statutory cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for all child development programs is currently included in the Governor's proposed budget for 1988-89 ($13.6 million). Assuming a 4.37 percent COLA is in the budget every year, it will cost approximately $1.6 million annually for preschool programs if the current level of service is constant. Other ongoing costs will total to a minimum of $1.6 million.
	State Administration **(Recommendations 3, 5, 9, 12)**
$.05 Million	It will cost an estimated $50,000 per year for the State Department of Education to provide inservice training and technical assistance to staff at the local level regarding developmentally appropriate practices for children ages four through six.
$1.4 Million	Minority and bilingual teacher recruitment efforts coordinated by the Chancellor of the California State University will cost the state approximately $1.4 million annually.
$.15 Million	The State Department of Education could conduct a public awareness campaign that addresses appropriate learning practices for children ages four through six at a cost of approximately $150,000. This cost includes public service announcements and the dissemination of pamphlets and posters. State administration costs amount to one-time costs of $.15 million, and ongoing costs of $1.45 million.